

OPINION 1941

Australopithecus afarensis Johanson, 1978 (Mammalia, Primates): specific name conserved

Keywords. Nomenclature; taxonomy; Primates; hominids; Pliocene; *Australopithecus afarensis*; East Africa.

Ruling

- (1) Under the plenary powers the specific name *africanus* Weinert, 1950, as published in the binomen *Meganthropus africanus*, is hereby suppressed for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy.
- (2) The name *Praeanthropus* Senyürek, 1955 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Meganthropus africanus* Weinert, 1950 (a suppressed senior subjective synonym of *Australopithecus afarensis* Johanson, 1978), is hereby placed on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology.
- (3) The name *afarensis* Johanson, 1978, as published in the binomen *Australopithecus afarensis* and as defined by the lectotype (specimen L.H.4 from Laetoli, preserved in the National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi) designated by Johanson, White & Coppens (1978) (first available subjective synonym of *Meganthropus africanus* Weinert, 1950, the type species of *Praeanthropus* Senyürek, 1955), is hereby placed on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.
- (4) The name *africanus* Weinert, 1950, as published in the binomen *Meganthropus africanus* and as suppressed in (1) above, is hereby placed on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology.

History of Case 2998

An application for the conservation of the specific name of *Australopithecus afarensis* Johanson, 1978 was received from Dr Colin Groves (*Australian National University, Canberra, Australia*) on 29 August 1995. After correspondence the case was published in BZN 53: 24–27 (March 1996). Notice of the case was sent to appropriate journals.

Comments in support of the application from Prof Tim White (*Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.*), Prof Paul Renné (*Geochronology Center, Berkeley, California, U.S.A. and Department of Geology, University of California, Berkeley, California*), Prof Christopher Stringer (*The Natural History Museum, London, U.K.*) and Dr James C. Ohman (*Hominid Palaeontology Research Group, New Medical School, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, U.K.*) were published in BZN 55: 241–243 (December 1998).

It was noted on the voting paper that, if the proposals were approved, the valid name of the type species of *Praeanthropus* Senyürek, 1955 (should that name be used taxonomically; paras. 6 and 7 of the application) would be *P. afarensis* (Johanson, 1978).

Decision of the Commission

On 1 March 1999 the members of the Commission were invited to vote on the proposals published in BZN 53: 26. At the close of the voting period on 1 June 1999 the votes were as follows:

Affirmative votes — 21: Bock, Bouchet (part), Brothers, Cocks, Dupuis (part), Eschmeyer, Heppell, Kabata, Kerzhner, Kraus, Macpherson, Mahnert, Martins de Souza, Mawatari, Minelli, Nielsen, Nye, Papp, Savage, Schuster, Štys

Negative votes — none.

No votes were received from Lehtinen, Patterson and Song.

Cogger and Ride were on leave of absence.

Bouchet voted in favour of proposals (1), (2) and (4) in para. 8, but against proposal (3); he commented: 'I approve the intention to conserve the name *Australopithecus afarensis* against the unused senior subjective synonym *Meganthropus africanus* Weinert, 1950. However, I object to crediting authorship of the name *Australopithecus afarensis* to Johanson (1978), rather than to Johanson, White & Coppens (1978)'. Brothers commented: 'Viewed from the strictly nomenclatural perspective, there would be no need to deviate from the provisions of the Code were the taxa concerned not of such general interest outside the realms of palaeontology and zoology per se. Pragmatism dictates that the proposals be supported under these exceptional circumstances'. Dupuis commented: 'Je vote pour la suppression en nomenclature du nom spécifique *africanus* Weinert (points (1) et (4)) mais je vote contre sa mention en taxinomie comme synonyme subjectif d'*afarensis* (point (2)). Je vote contre (2) car il me paraît inutile d'officialiser en nomenclature le nom générique *Praeanthropus* qui, en taxinomie 'has not been used since its publication' et qui, par pure hypothèse, 'will be needed in the future'.

Original references

The following are the original references to the names placed on Official Lists and an Official Index by the ruling given in the present Opinion:

afarensis, *Australopithecus*, Johanson, 1978, in Hinrichson, D., *New Scientist*, 78(1105): 571.
africanus, *Meganthropus*, Weinert, 1950, *Zeitschrift für Morphologie und Anthropologie*, 42(1): 139.

Praeanthropus Senyürek, 1955, *Bulleten* (Ankara), 19: 33.

The following is the reference for the designation of the lectotype of *Australopithecus afarensis* Johanson, 1978:

Johanson, D.C., White, T.D. & Coppens, Y. 1978. *Kirtlandia* (Cleveland), 28: 2.